

Message Series (part 1): “I Promise...Victory”

This morning, we are beginning a brand new message series called “I Promise: God’s Promises for Everyday Life” where, over the course of the summer, we’re going to spend some time devoting ourselves the study of the promises of God...

...because our God is a God of promises...

Psalms 145:13 puts it like this...

¹³The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.

...and I love the plural here: “The Lord is faithful to all his promises” because our God makes not just one promise, but many promises...promises of provision and protection and peace and hope and forgiveness and, most importantly, salvation
And this series is devoted to studying some of these promises of God...

(The word “**promise**” comes from a Latin word **promittere** which is a compound word

...there’s **pro** = “**toward**” and **mittere** = “**to send**”

...and so the sense of a promise is that something is on it’s way, but it’s not quite there yet...it’s been sent, but it hasn’t arrived

(ILL: It’s kind of like when a person is in debt and they’re falling behind on a bunch of payments for credit cards and mortgages and medical bills...

...and all of these bill collectors start calling...and, a lot of times, these bill collectors are pushy...they know how to make a debtor squirm...and sometimes, just to alleviate the tension in the conversation and to get the bill collector off the phone, the debtor will say: “The check’s in the...” What? “Mail!”

And that’s the sense of what the word “promise” means...

...“The check’s in the mail / *promittere*...it’s been sent toward you, but it’s not quite there yet”...that’s a promise

Unfortunately, when a debtor makes that kind of a promise / *promittere* to a bill collector, is it always true? No!

...and these leads me to a fundamental fault of human promises: *Human promises are often broken (2x)*

There's an old saying from one of Aesop's fables called "The Nurse and Wolf":
"Promises are made to be...broken"

...because humans don't always keep their promises...in fact, a lot of times, we live with this profound cynicism that humans will indeed break their promises

- You're watching TV late one night and an infomercial comes on for one of those amazing diet pill that *promises* to take 4 inches off your waist in just two weeks! And you don't have to diet or exercise. Just take this little pill!

Do you tend to believe the infomercial or disbelieve the infomercial? You tend to disbelieve it...because promises are made to be broken

- You're watching the news one afternoon and you see a politician out on the trail running for office making campaign promises..."I promise," he says, "to cut the deficit, reduce crime, bring integrity back to government, and make everyone happy"...Now, do you tend to believe or disbelieve these kinds of promise? You tend to disbelieve them...because promises are made to be broken

And yet, in the midst of our broken promises, we receive this beautiful promise from God: *The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.*

...in a world of broken promises, God never breaks his promises...he is always faithful to what he promises

And so today, I'd like to spend some time studying the first promise ever made by God...and, if I can argue, not only is it the first promise ever made by God, it's also the *best* promise ever made by God...and we'll find out why as we move along...

Genesis 3:1

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made.

...a quick note on the Hebrew here in which the OT was originally written...

(The word for "serpent" is **nachash**...and the word **nachash** is a cognate of the work **nechoshet** meaning, "**copper**" or "bronze" because that's the color of a lot of snakes

...and so think: this is a copper colored snake, like a copperhead...

...i.e., the very etymology of this Hebrew word clues us into the fact that snakes are dangerous / hurtful / harmful creatures...

But one day, this dangerous creature comes up to a woman named Eve...

Genesis 3:1 again...

¹The serpent said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Now, first off, is this really what God said? No!

Genesis 2:16-17 God says...

¹⁶"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

And so God says, you can eat, not from no tree in the garden, but from every tree in the garden...except one...except one...the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...

...and isn't it fascinating how Satan shifts Eve's attention away from the all the freedom / *permission* that God gives Adam and Eve to eat from all these trees and turns it to God's one *prohibition*: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

You know, this is still one of Satan's tricks...

...to turn our attention away from the amazing freedom that we have in Christ – freedom for love / joy / service / discovery / rest / work / integrity – he wants to turn our attention away from all the stuff that God allows us to do to the stuff God prohibits: things like abusing our bodies with sex or alcohol or gluttony...or stepping on others to get ahead...or carrying around secrets of sins

He wants to turn our attention to that stuff so he can say, "Wow! What a killjoy that God is! He's so demanding / harsh / cruel"

(This is what Satan is doing with Eve here...

...and this is how Eve responds to Satan...

Genesis 3:2-5

²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

...and so Eve demurs here...she says, "No snake! That's not what God really said! He was just talking about one tree, not all the trees!"

But Satan keeps pressing...

⁴"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Now, I've always found the way Satan tempts Eve into eating the fruit to be quite funny

He says, "You know, there's a really cool thing that'll happen if you break God's command and eat that fruit...it's not death...it's that: *you will be like God*"

Now, here's the funny part of that temptation: Is Eve already like God? Yes or no?

(Actually, at least in one regard, "Yes!" She's made in the image of God!

Genesis 1:27

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

People, Scripture says, are created in the image of God...

...this is what sets us apart from all the creatures of the earth...we, in a very deep and profound way, reflect God more than anything else he has made

And so, when Satan says, "Hey, if you eat that fruit, you will be like God," Eve should have responded, "Bluh, big stinkin' deal! I'm already like God! I'm made in his image! I'm known and cared for and loved by him!"...but Eve doesn't say that...

And so, Satan continues...

"If you eat of this fruit, you will be like God, knowing...good!"

Now, again, does Eve already know what good is?

Of course she does! She lives in a paradise called Eden! And it's very good!

Genesis 1:31

³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

...and so creation is good...the garden is good...Eve knows all about good...

And so, when Satan says, "Hey! If you eat of the fruit of the tree, you will be like God, knowing...good," Eve should have responded: "Big stinkin' deal! I already know what good is! Hello?! Look at where I'm living"...but Eve doesn't say that...

And so Satan continues again...

"If you eat of the fruit of this tree, you will be like God, knowing good...and *evil*"

And here indeed is something that Eve does not know: Eve does not know evil...

...for up to this point, Eve has never had to suffer from the guilt of a wrongdoing / the grief of a loss / the sting of a betrayal...she's never had to experience evil...

And so, this, really, when you get right down to it, is Satan's offer to Eve: "You can

know evil and all of the hurt and heartache and grief and pain that evil causes”

(Now, does this strike you as an incredibly appealing temptation? No!

...And yet, Eve falls for it...Why? Because all Eve hears is: “Hey, I can be like God” which she interprets to mean, “I can be *more* like God. I can have a little bit more power / prestige / sway. I can be a little *more* like God”

And so...

Genesis 3:6

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, (for being *more* like God) she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Maybe you’ve had this experience before: Whenever you do something wrong / ashamed of, you always have a funny way of being found out.

(ILL: One of the things that I have become hooked on recently is HEB Trail Mix...

...I kid you not, I buy one of those big \$8 bags and eat it in a few days...I love it
...My wife, Melody, however, does not really appreciate my new found addiction...because let’s face it, at \$8 a bag, it’s kind of an expensive habit...
...and so whenever I’m sitting there eating trail mix on the couch with her, she’ll always remind me, “Now don’t eat too much...it’s expensive!”

And so, what I’ve done, is I’ve changed my trail mix eating habits a little bit...

...now, I just eat it when she’s not around! I’m sneaking trail mix!

But Melody has a funny way of finding me out...

...because she’ll get home, and she’ll kiss me, and the first words out of her mouth are: “What have you been eating?” because she can smell the trail mix on my breath...and I’m caught / had

And this is exactly what happens with Adam and Eve...

...they can’t hide from God...because God can smell the sin on their breath

And so he says to Eve...

Genesis 3:13-15

¹³The LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”¹⁴ The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

...and I love the old KJV here: “The serpent beguiled me...he tricked me!”

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this: Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

...and then, the first promise of Scripture...

¹⁵And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Very first promise of Scripture right there...made by God

(Now, it's kind of interesting, because this promise is very simple and subtle...

...God doesn't announce: “Okay, I'm going to make a promise now! *I promise* to put enmity between you and the woman, Satan!”...He doesn't say, “I swear” OR “Cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye,” he simply says, “*I will...*”

And so, there's nothing flashy / flamboyant / exceptionally notable about the way God makes this promise...

...and this is because, when God makes a promise, he always keeps it...and so he doesn't need any flash / flamboyance / pomp and circumstance

The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made, the Psalmist says

And so God simply has to say, “I will...” and you can take it to the bank...

...because it is 100% certain that God will keep his promises...

And this is the promise that God makes:

“I will put enmity between you and the woman”

And I love this promise...

...because Eve has just been beguiled / tricked by Satan...but now God promises: “It's not going to always be this way...you're not just going to live your whole life being tricked and beguiled by Satan...I'm going to put some tension / suspicion / enmity there...I'm going to give you this deep sense that Satan wants to do you harm...and even if you'll fall / even if you'll sin, you'll also yearn / hope / long for a day when sin will be banished and Satan will be conquered...”

And this is where the next part of God's promise comes in: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he (this child of Eve) will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*

God says, “There is coming an offspring of Eve who will crush the head of Satan...who will make sure that Satan is no more...”

...and theologians have often called this the *protoevangelion*, or “first gospel,” because who is this offspring from Eve that God is talking about? It’s Jesus!

Right here, right after the first sin in history – where Adam and Eve eat from the fruit of the tree of which God says, “Do not eat!” – God already has a plan / remedy for their sin and a punishment for Satan and his beguilement: He will send Jesus to forgive sinners and crush the head of Satan on the cross...

...“There is victory coming,” God says...“Victory over sin, death, beguilement, and Satan...because Jesus is coming...and Jesus will crush the head Satan”

(ILL: It’s kind of like this: Although they didn’t make it to the National Championship to play the LA Lakers like everyone was hoping they were, what kind of a season did the Cleveland Cavaliers have? Yeah, they had a pretty good one...

...in fact, they were rolling through the playoffs until they hit the Orlando Magic...and then everything began to go downhill from there

But even though the Cavs lost the series to the Magic, they still probably walked away with what was the highlight of that series...

(It was game two of the series, the Cavs and Magic are tied when the Magic go up two with only one second left...

...and it looked like the Cavs were going to lose...it looked like they were going to be down for the count...but then, here comes LeBron James and at the buzzer he shoots a three and, Boom!, it’s good! And the Cavs win the game

(Now, as awesome, as amazing, as incredible as that moment was, probably my favorite scene from that moment wasn’t at the game itself, it was at a local TV station in Cleveland, on the air doing the news during the final seconds of that game...

...take a look ***SHOW VIDEO***

Pretty exciting stuff, huh?

I love it! Even the newscaster can’t contain themselves: Cavs win! Cavs win!

(Some 2,000 years ago, a man named Jesus walked this earth...

...and after a whirlwind tour of ministry, his enemies finally catch up with him...and they arrest him and beat him and mock him and spit upon him and

ridicule him and wound him and pierce him and hang him on a cross to kill him
...and it looks like Satan has won / just like Satan got the best of Eve, he has
also best gotten the best of the Son of God...Satan has beguiled Jesus

And Jesus bows his head and he gives up his spirit...

...and Satan shouts, "Ha! I've won! I've killed the Christ! I've gotten the victory!"

But what Satan fails to notice is...there's still a second left on the clock...

...and sure this second is the longest second in history...sure, this second seems
more like three days...but Jesus, when everyone thought he was down and out,
at the buzzer, pushes the stone back from his tomb and the angels sing, "Jesus
wins! Jesus wins! Jesus wins!"

And all this was prophesied / forecasted / promised...all the way back in Genesis 3...

(ILL: You know, I've heard more than one pastor say in a sermon, kind of tongue and
cheek, if you're worried about whether God will win the battle over sin and death and
the devil, don't worry...because I've read the back of the book...and we win!

...and as much as I appreciate that sentiment, I don't even need to read the back
of the book to know that we win, I just have to read the beginning...because
already, only three chapters in, I know who wins...Jesus wins! Because God has
made a promise...and what God promises always happens

*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will
crush your head, oh Satan...Jesus will crush your head...Jesus wins!*

And so, maybe you're here this morning and you need some victory...

- Maybe you're struggling with some addiction: alcohol, sex, gambling...if this is
you, know this: You've now read the beginning of the book...and Jesus wins...
- Maybe you're struggling with regret or remorse over some sin in your past...if this
is you, know this: You've now read the beginning of the book...and Jesus wins
- Maybe you're just kind of hopeless...all the terror and injustice and evil in this
world just makes you want to throw up your hands in despair...if this is you, know
this: You've now read the beginning of the book...and Jesus wins...

Jesus wins! That's the promise of Scripture...from the beginning to the end...

...and what a glorious promise it is...